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25 February 1980

MEMORANDUM FOR: DD/OPA

FROM : DC/OPA/USSR-EE

SUBJECT : FBIS' Analytical Group

*Bob,*

1. The question of whether there should be an Analytical Group and where it should be housed has arisen periodically over the years. Because the Group produces analysis in theory based almost solely on Communist media, it does not seem to belong to an all-source analytical organization. But because it does analyze, neither does it seem to belong in a collection organization. The decisions previously reached have all been to leave the Analytical Group with the collectors.

2. We in the USSR-EE Division agree with those decisions. We have a high regard for the people who staff the Group and have over the years been impressed by the quality of the product they put out. Because of their professionalism and their organizational independence from us, they constitute an alternative center of analysis on the USSR with whom many of our analysts and managers compare ideas and on which they test their analytical predispositions.

3. We appreciate the Analytical Group most, however, for the assistance it gives us. It is the Agency's institutional memory on the content of Soviet media, possessing unique files of inestimable value as analytical tools. It is almost always receptive to requests for assistance--e.g., what did the Soviets say about withdrawing their forces after their invasion of Czechoslovakia. The Analytical Group is particularly good at defining the significance of statements and communiques and plotting the evolution of policies expressed over time. Its Trends in Communist Media is one of the best periodicals on Soviet affairs produced in Washington, and the dissemination by wire of the more important articles in it gives its analyses great timeliness. Judgments in this publication frequently find their way directly into our own publications--e.g., The Invasion of Afghanistan: Implications for Soviet Foreign Policy, PA 80-10020, January 1980.

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4. One further benefit of the Analytical Group for CIA is that its work obviates pressures that would no doubt otherwise fall on OPA to produce more in the unclassified and lower classified ranges of intelligence. Any effort on our part to sanitize or downgrade a major share of our production would be an onerous burden. Because much of the Analytical Group's work, moreover, ends up in the public domain--where it is well received--the Agency as a whole has its reputation enhanced and its relations with the academic and journalistic worlds improved.

5. Our enthusiasm for the work done by the Analytical Group on the USSR is not matched by our regard for its work on Eastern Europe. Our lesser, but still high, regard results largely from the fact that the Group has not over the years devoted very large assets to Eastern Europe and accordingly has never developed a comparable degree of depth and continuity. We sometimes also believe that their articles are pretentious, in that they reach judgments supposedly based on analyses of the media only, when in fact they are broadly informed by the Analytical Group's access to classified information. And we sometimes believe that, when only media information is available, the Analytical Group overreaches the evidence in arriving at its judgments.

6. These carpings notwithstanding, the Analytical Group is a considerable Agency asset, both as a producer on its own and as a contributor of information and analyses to OPA's work. If the Analytical Group were not doing the work it does, we would have to; indeed, at one time OCI did have its own modest Soviet media effort. It would be a near tragedy if a change designed to achieve greater organizational tidiness had the side effect of diminishing the high quality of the work that the Group now does. It would further, in our view, be a mistake to reduce the resources devoted to this effort. We, rather, would like the Analytical Group to be strengthened so it could branch out into spheres such as Soviet military doctrine and Communist ideology and theory.

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